

Message Text

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ACTION EA-09

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SUBJ: NATIONAL ASSEMBLY WINDS UP SPECIAL SESSION

REF: (A) SEOUL 5552; (B) SEOUL 5576 (C) SEOUL 5557

SUMMARY: ON JULY 6, NATIONAL ASSEMBLY CONCLUDED IN PLENARY SESSION WHERE IT PASSED THREE RESOLUTION/RECOMMENDATIONS AND NINE OTHER BILLS. MAJOR POLITICAL CHARACTERISTICS OF ASSEMBLY WERE: MEANINGFUL POLITICAL BARGAINING BETWEEN GOVERNMENT AND OPPOSITION PARTIES, DEGREE OF FREEDOM ENJOYED BY ASSEMBLYMEN TO SPEAK OUT IN COMMITTEE AND FLOOR, AND ABILITY OF LEADERSHIP OF BOTH PARTIES TO KEEP MEMBERS IN LINE AND GET BILLS THROUGH. END SUMMARY.

1. ON JULY 6, NATIONAL ASSEMBLY WOULD UP 17 AY SESSION BY UNANIMOUSLY PASSING RESOLUTION OPPOSING TROOP WITHDRAWAL AS WELL AS MYONGDONG EMERGENCY MEASURE NO. NINE RECOMMENDATION ON "INTERNAL POLITICS." (REFS). ALL ASSEMBLYMEN BUT THREE
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DUP MEMBERS (WHO WALKED OUT) ALSO VOTED FOR RESOLUTION WHICH TAKES U.S. TO TASK FOR ANTI-ROK ACTIVITIES IN U.S. DUP NOTED LATER THAT PARTY CONSIDERED ROKG ALSO RESPONSIBLE IN PAK TONG-SON AND KIM HYONG-UK CASES.

2. NDP AND DUP VOTED AGAINST 210,700 MILLION WON SUPPLEMENTARY BUDGET AS A PROTEST AGAINST ROKG'S UNWILLINGNESS TO POSTPONE

IMPLEMENTATION OF VALUE ADDED TAX (VAT) SYSTEM, AND TO PROTEST ESCALATION OF PUBLIC EXPENDITURES; THEY HAD NO ALTERNATIVE BUDGET PLAN OF THEIR OWN, HOWEVER, SUPPLEMENTAL BUDGET, OF COURSE PASSED HANDILY. NDP ALSO OPPOSED SPECIAL LAW BILL ON CONSTRUCTION OF NEW ADMINISTRATIVE CAPITAL. NDP REPORTEDLY CONSIDERED THAT LAW CALLING FOR PRICE FREEZE ON LAND ULTIMATELY TO BE SELECTED AS CAPITAL SITE, PREMATURE SINCE ASSEMBLY HAS NOT EVEN APPROVED RELOCATION OF CAPITAL IN PRINCIPLE THUS FAR. BELIEVING PRESIDENT PAK HIMSELF TO BE PARTICULARLY INTERESTED IN THIS PROJECT, NDP SUCCESSFULLY USED PROLONGED DEBATE ON ISSUE DURING COMMITTEE HEARINGS AS AN ADDITIONAL BARGAINING POINT IN NEGOTIATIONS OVER WORDING IN MYONGDONG RECOMMENDATION.

3. MANY OBSERVERS NOTE IN PRIVATE AND IN PRESS BOTH THAT AS USUAL AND AS EXPECTED GOVERNMENT PASSED ITS PROGRAMS UNSCRATCHED. REAL STORY OF ASSEMBLY WAS IN THIS TYPE OF "GIVE AND TAKE" IN NEGOTIATIONS WHICH PRODUCED THE RESOLUTIONS NOTED ABOVE AS WELL AS EIGHT OTHER MINOR LAW BILLS AND AMENDMENTS ON FINANCE, MILITARY SUPPLY, HOUSING AND A SOCIAL SECURITY AGREEMENT WITH IRAN (REF A). WHAT IS ALSO TRUE IS THAT DRP AND OPPOSITION BOTH TOOK OCCASION TO SOMETIMES NEEDLE AND SOMETIMES TAKE CALCULATED SLAPS AT ROKG IN COMMITTEE AND ON FLOOR. AFTER INTERPELLATIONS ONE ROK MINISTER NOTED PRIVATELY THAT IT WAS OFTEN HOTTER IN COMMITTEE DEBATES THAN OUTSIDE IN THE JULY WEATHER. POLICY DIFFERENCES WERE LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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AIRER, EVEN ON SUCH SENSITIVE ITEMS AS PRESS FREEDOM, MYONGDONG, KIM TAE-CHUNG, PAK TONG-SON AND RELATED ISSUES TO EVEN INCLUDE FERTILIZER AND TEXTBOOK SCANDALS WHICH HAVE BEEN FESTERING LONG IN THE PUBLIC EYE. SOME ASSEMBLYMEN WENT SO FAR AS TO VENTURE CRITICISM OF PRESIDENT PAK-ALBEIT IN A MILD AND INDIRECT FASHION AND ONE NDP ASSEMBLYMAN TELLS US HE "GOT AWAY" WITH A LOT MORE THAN EXPECTED.

4. AS WE HAVE REPORTED ELSEWHERE CONG IL-KWON BELIEVES NDP "GOT AWAY WITH MURDER". ONE DRP ASSEMBLYMAN TOLD EMBOFF THAT SOMEWHAT FREER ATMOSPHERE IN COMMITTEE SESSIONS ALSO GAVE DRP OPPORTUNITY TO GET SOME COMPLAINTS OFF THEIR CHESTS, PARTICULARLY ON INTRAMINISTERIAL PROCEDURES AND DECISIONS DRP CAME OUT WITH ITS USUAL GRAY IMAGE REFRESHED. IT NOT ONLY BARGAINED WITH NDP ON RESOLUTIONS, BUT ALSO MANAGED PASSAGE OF SUPPLEMENTAL BUDGET AND OTHER LAW BILLS WITH RELATIVELY LITTLE LANGUAGE CHANGED FROM ORIGINAL GOVERNMENT DRAFTS. GOVERNMENT IS PLEASED BY THIS AND SO IS BLUE HOUSE.

5. ON OTHER NOTABLE POINT: ASSEMBLY LEADERS SHOWED UNCHARACTERISTIC RESPONSIBILITY AND COMMAND IN KEEPING THEIR MEMBERS WELL IN LINE DESPITE HEAT GENERATED BY THE UNUSUALLY OPEN ATMOSPHERE.

FOR EXAMPLE, NDP'S HAN PYONG-CHAE WAS ONE OF THOSE WHO, HOWEVER TENUOUSLY, LINKED PRESIDENT PARK TO HUMAN RIGHTS VIOLATIONS, SPARKING A CONFLICT WITH YUCHONGHOE'S CHUNG CHAE-HO WITH CONSEQUENT MUTUAL RECRIMINATION AND IN SULT. SIGNIFICANCE OF IMBROGLIO WAS IN TEMPERATE HANDLING OF AFFAIR BY ASSEMBLY LEADERSHIP WHICH AVOIDED DISCIPLINARY MEASURES AGAINST EITHER MAN AND NO DELAY IN TIMETABLE OF COMMITTEES OR PLENARY.

6. NOW THAT THE ASSEMBLY SESSION IS OVER, PARTIES WILL OBSERVE WHAT ACTION ROKG TAKES ON POLITICAL PRISONERS. IF ROKG MAKES A SIGNIFICANT GESTURE ON THIS SCORE, NDP CAN BE EXPECTED TO MOVE FORWARD TO OTHER "POLITICAL DEVELOPMENT" ISSUES SUCH AS REVISION OF NATIONAL ASSEMBLY PROCEDURAL RULES, REVISION OF THE ELECTION LAW AND PERHAPS THE ARRANGEMENT LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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OF "SUMMIT MEETING" BETWEEN NDP PARTY LEADERS AND PRESIDENT PAK. CHUNGANG ILBO NOTES THAT AFTER A LONG LULL, "LIFE HAS BEGUN TO RETURN TO POLITICS". IT IS NOTEWORTHY THAT BOTH NDP AND DRP ARE BEGINNING TO ASK FOR POLITICAL OPERATING CASH FOR THEIR EMPTY COFFERS. SNEIDER

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